The GIRL from TIM'S PLACE

BY CHARLES CLARK MUNN

SYNOPSIS.

Chip McGuire, a 16-year-old girl living at Tim's place in the Maine woods, is sold by her father to Pete Bolduc, a half-breed. She runs away and reaches the camp of Martin Frisbie, occupied by Martin, his wife, nephew, Raymond Stetson, and guides. She tells her story and is cared for by Mrs. Frisbie.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

Angie smiled, while Martin stared at the girl with increased astonishment. He knew who this McGuire was, and something of his history, and that Tim's Place was a hillside clearing far up the river, inhabited by an Irish family devoted to the raising of potatoes. He had halted there once, long enough to observe its somewhat slothful condition, and to buy pork and potatoes; but this tale was a revelation, and the girl herself a greater one.

This oasis in the wilderness was fully 40 miles above here, its only connection with civilization was a seldom-used log road which only an experienced woodsman could follow, and how this mere child had dared it, was a marvel.

But there she was, squat on the ground and watching them with big black, pleading eyes. There was but one thing to do, to care for her now, as humanity insisted, and Angie made the first move. It was in the direction of cleanliness; for entering the tent, she soon appeared with some of her own extra clothing, soap, and towels, and bade the girl follow her up the river a few rods.

The moon was shining clearly above the treetops, the camp-fire burned brightly, and Martin, Ray and Levi were lounging near it when the two returned, and in one an astonishing transformation had taken place.

Angie had gone away with a girl of ten in respect to clothing, her skirt evidently made of gunny cloth and reaching but little below her knees, and for a waist, what was once a man's red flannel shirt, and both in rags. Soiled with black mud, and bleeding, she was an object pitiable beyond words; she returned a young lady, almost, in stature, her face shining and rosy, and her eyes so tender with gratitude that they were pathetic.

Another change had also come with cleanliness and clothing—a sudden bashfulness. It was some time ere she could be made to talk again, but finally that wore away and then her story came. What a tale it was—scarce credible.

It was a fantastic, weird, almost spookish tale,—the spectres she had seen were so real to her that the telling made them seem almost so to the rest, and beyond that, the girl herself, so like a young witch, with her shadowy eyes and furtive glances, added to the illusion.

But now came a diversion, for Levi freshened the fire, and at a nod from Angie, Ray brought forth his banjo. It was his one pet foible, and it went with him everywhere, and now, with time and place so in accord, he was glad to exhibit his talent. He was not an expert,—a few jigs and plantation melodies composed his repertory,—but with the moonlight glinting through the spruce boughs, the river murmuring near, somehow one could not fail to catch the quaint humor of "Old Uncle Ned," "Jim Crack Corn," and the like, and see the two dusky lovers as they floated down the "Tombigbee River" and feel the pathos of "Nellie Grey" and "Old Kentucky Home."

Ray sang fairly well and in sympathy with each theme. To Angie and the rest it was but ordinary; but to this waif, who never before had heard a banjo or a darky song, it was marvelous. Her face lit up with keen interest, her eyes grew misty at times, and once two tears stole down her cheeks.

For an hour Ray was the center of interest, and then Angie arose.

"Come, Chip," she said pleasantly, "it's time to go to bed, and you are to share my tent."

"I'd rather not," the girl replied bluntly. "I ain't fit. I kin jist as well curl 'longside o' the fire."

But Angie insisted and the girl followed her into the tent.

Here occurred another incident that must be related. Angie, always devout, and somewhat puritanical, was one who never forgot her nightly prayer, and now, when ready for slumber, she knelt on the bed of fir twigs, and by the light of one small candle offered her usual petition, while Chip watched her with wide and wondering eyes. As might be expected, that waif was mentioned, and with deep feeling.

"Do ye s'pose God heard ye?" she queried with evident candor, when Angie ceased.

"Why, certainly," came the earnest answer; "God hears all prayers."

"And do the spites hear 'em?"

"There are no such creatures as 'spites,'" answered Angie, severely; "you only imagine them, and what this Indian has told you is superstition."

"But I've seen 'em, hundreds on 'em, big and little," returned the girl, stoutly.

Angie looked at her with pity.

"Put that notion out of your head, once for all," she said, almost sternly. "It is only a delusion, and no doubt and to scare you."

And poor Chip, conscious that perhaps she had sinned in speech, said no more.

For a long time Angie lay sleepless upon her fragrant bed, recalling the waif's strange story and trying to grasp the depth and breadth of her life at Tim's Place; also to surmise, if possible, how serious a taint of evil she had inherited. That her father was vile beyond compare seemed positive; that her mother might have been scarce better was probable. No mention, thus far, had been made of her; and so Angie reflected upon this pitiful child's ancestry and what manner of heritage she had been blessed or cursed with. Some of her attributes awoke Angie's admiration. She had shown utter abhorrence of this brutal sale of herself, a marvelous courage in endeavoring to escape it. She seemed grateful for what had been done for her, and a partial realization of her own unfitness for association with refined people. Her speech was no worse than might be expected from her life at Tim's Place. Doubtless, she was unable to read or write. And so Angie lay, considering all the pros and cons of the situation and of this girl's life.

There was also another side to it all, the humane one. They were on their way out of the wilderness, for a business visit to the nearest settlement, intending to return to the woods in a few days—and what was to be done with this child of misfortune?

Most assuredly they must protect her for the present. But was there anyone to whom she could be turned over and cared for? It seemed possible this brutal buyer of her would follow her out of the woods, to abduct her if found, and then the moral side of this episode with all its abominable possibilities occurred to Angie, who was, above all, unselfish and noble-hearted. Vice, crime, and immorality were horrible to her.

"I Never Had Nothin' But Work 'n Cussin'."

Here was a self-evident duty thrusting itself upon her, and how to meet it with justice to herself, her husband, and her own conscience, was a problem. Thus dwelling upon this complex situation, she fell asleep.

The first faint light of morning was stealing into the tent when Angie felt her companion stir. She had, exhausted as she doubtless was, fallen asleep almost the moment she lay down; but now she was evidently awake.

Curious to note what she would do, Angie remained with closed eyes and motionless. From the corner of the tent where she had curled up the night before, the girl now cautiously crept toward the elder woman. Inch by inch, upon the bed of boughs, she moved nearer, until Angie, watching with half-opened eyes, saw her head lowered, and felt two soft, warm lips touch her hand.

It was a trifle. It was no more than the act of a cat who rubs herself against her mistress or a dog who licks his master's hand, and yet it settled once for all that waif's fate and Angie's indecision.

CHAPTER III.

Levi was starting a fire, Ray washing potatoes, and Martin, in his shirt-sleeves, using a towel vigorously near the canoes, when Angie and Chip emerged that morning; and now while breakfast is under way, a moment may be seized to explain who the people were and their mission in this wilderness.

Many years before, in a distant village called Greenvale, two brothers, David and Amzi Curtis, had quarreled over an unfortunate division of inherited land. The outcome was that Amzi, somewhat misanthropic over the death of his wife, and of peculiar makeup, deserted his home and little daughter Angeline, and vanished. For many years no one knew of his whereabouts, and he was given up as dead.

In the meantime his child, cared for by a kindly woman known as Aunt Comfort, had grown to womanhood. About this time a boyhood sweetheart of Angeline's, named Martin Frisbie, who had been gathering wealth in a distant city, invited a former schoolmate, now the village doctor in Greenvale, to join him on an outing trip into the wilderness.

Here something of the history of a notorious outlaw named McGuire became known to Martin, and more important than that, a queer old hermit was discovered, dwelling in solitude on the shore of a small lake. Who he was, and why this strange manner of life, Martin could not learn, and not until later, when he returned to Greenvale to woo his former sweetheart once more, did he even guess. Here, however, from a description furnished by a village nonedscript,—a sort of Natty Bumpo and philosopher combined, known as Old Cy Walker, who had been Martin's youthful companion,—he was led to believe that the queer hermit and the long-missing Amzi were one and the same.

Another trip into this wilderness with Old Cy, taken to identify the hermit, resulted in proving the correctness of the surmise. Then Martin set about making this misanthropic recluse more comfortable in all ways possible; and then, leaving Old Cy to keep him company, he returned to Greenvale and Angie.

A marriage was the outcome of his return to his native village, and then, with his nephew, Ray, and long-tried guide, Levi, as helpers on this unique wedding trip, the hermit was visited.

It was hoped that meeting his child once more would result in inducing him to abandon his wildwood existence and to return to civilization; and it did—partially. He seemed happy to meet his daughter again, consented to return with them when ready, and after a couple of weeks' sojourn here, the canoes were packed and all set out for civilization and Greenvale once more.

But "home, sweet home," albeit it was, as in this case, a lonely log cabin in a vast wilderness, proved stronger than parental love or aught else; and sometime during first night's camp on the way out, this strange recluse stole away in his canoe and returned.

"It's natur," Old Cy observed when morning came, "an' home is the hardest spot in the world to forgit. Amzi's lived in that old shack all 'lone for 20 years. He's got wonted to it like a dog to his kennel, an' all the powers o' the univarse can't break up the feelin'."

It seemed an indisputable, if disappointing, fact, and Martin led his party back to the hermit's home once more.

Another plan was now considered by Martin—to buy the township, or at least a large tract enclosing this lake, build a more commodious log cabin for the use of himself and his wife, and spend a portion of each summer there. There were several reasons other than those of affection for this decision.

This lake, perhaps half a mile in diameter, teemed with trout. The low mountains enclosing it were thickly covered with fine spruce and fir, groves of pine with some beech and birch grew in the valleys; deer, moose and feathered game abounded here, and best of all, no vandal lumbermen ever encroached upon this region.

It was, all considered, a veritable sportsman's paradise. Most likely a few thousand dollars would purchase it, and so, for these collective reasons, Martin decided to buy it.

Old Cy was left to keep the hermit company; Martin, his wife, and Ray, with Levi, started for civilization to obtain needed supplies, and had been four days upon the way when this much-abused waif appeared on the scene. The party were journeying in two canoes, one manned by Ray, who had already learned to wield a paddle, which carried the tents and luggage; while the other was occupied by Martin, his wife, and Levi. The only available seat for the new arrival was in Ray's canoe, and when breakfast was disposed of and the voyagers ready to start, she was given a place therein.

The river at this point was broad and of slow current, only two days' journey was needful to reach the settlement ,and no cause for worry appeared—but Levi felt otherwise.

"You'd best hug the futher shore," he observed to Ray quietly when the boy pushed off, "an' don't git out o' sight o' us." "I ain't sartin 'bout the outcome o' this matter," he said to Martin later. "I know that half-breed, Bolduc, and he's a bad 'un. From the gal's story he paid big money fer her. He don't know the meanin' o' law, and if he follers down the tote road, as I callate he will, 'n' ketches sight o' her, the first we'll know on't 'll be the crack o' a rifle. The wonder to me is he didn't ketch her 'fore she got to us. He could track her faster'n she could run. I don't want to 'larm you folks, but I shan't feel easy till we're out o' the woods."

It wasn't reassuring.

But no thought of this came to Ray, at least, and these two young people, yielding to the magic of the morning, the rippled river that bore them onward, the birds singing along the fir-clad banks, and all the exhilaration of the wilderness, soon reached the carefree converse of youthful friends.

"I never had nothin' but work 'n cussin'," Chip responded, when Ray asked if she never had any time she could call her own. "Tim thinked I couldn't get tired, I guess. He'd roust me up fust of all 'n' larrup me if he caught me shirkin'. Once I had a little posey bed back o' the pigpen. I fixed it after dark an' mornin's when I ketched the chance. He ketched me thar one mornin' a-weedin' it 'n' knocked me sprawlin' an' then stomped all over the posies. That night I went out into the woods 'n' begged the spites to git him killed somehow. 'Nother time I forgot to put up the bars, an' the cows got into the taters. That night he tied me to a stump clus to the bars, an' left me thar all night. I used to be more skeered o' my dad 'n I was o' Tim, tho'. He'd look at me like he hated me, an' say, 'Shut up,' if I said a word, an' I 'most believed he'd kill me, just fer nothin'. Once he said he'd take me out into the woods at night 'n' bait a bear trap with me if he heerd I didn't mind Tim. I told Old Tomah that, an' he sid if he did, he'd shoot him; but Old Tomah wasn't round only winters. I hated dad so I'd 'a' shot him myself, I guess, if I cud 'a' got hold o' a gun when he wa'n't watchin'."

"It's awful to have to feel that way toward your own father," interrupted Ray, "for he was your father."

"I s'pose 'twas," admitted Chip, candidly, "but I never felt much different. I've seen him slap mother when she was on her knees a-bawlin', and' the way he would cuss her was awful."

"But you had some friendship from this old Indian," queried Ray, who began to realize what a pitiful life the girl had led; "he was good to you, wasn't he?"

"He was, sartin," returned Chip, eagerly; "he used to tell me the spites 'ud fix dad 'fore long, so he'd never show up agin, 'n' when I got big 'nuff he'd sneak me off some night 'n' take me to the settlement, whar I could arn a livin'. Old Tomah was the only one who cared a cuss fer me. I used to bawl when he went away every spring, an' beg him to take me 'long 'n' help him camp 'n' cook. I'd 'a' done 'most anything fer Old Tomah. I didn't mind wearin' clothes made out o' old duds 'n' bein' cussed fer not workin' hard 'nuff. What I did mind was not havin' nobody who cared whether I lived or died, or said a good word to me. Sometimes I got so lonesome, I used to go out in the woods nights when 'twas moonlight 'n' beg the spites to help me. I used to think mother might be one on 'em 'n' she'd keer fer me. I think she was, an' 'twas her as kept me goin' till I found you folks' camp. I got awful skeered them nights I was runnin' away, an' when 'twas so dark I couldn't see no more, an' heerd wildcats yowlin', I'd git on my knees 'n' beg mother to keep 'em away. I think she did, an' allus shall."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

His High Estimation of Steam.

Carlyle once startled the English-speaking people into recognition of the value of their great dramatist by suddenly asking the British public which it would rather lose, Shakespeare or India? "I thought of that the other day, muses the editor of the Ruder, when I was reading an article on steam navigation. What would the world rather lose than steam? What? Why, almost everything; our literature, our art, our religions. Nothing we have is so valuable as steam. It is the greatest civilizer the world has ever possessed.

"I presume all the beautiful women in the country purchased it?"

"No; but the homely women did."—Houston Post.

HIS TURN TO CRITICISE.

Youngster Felt Called on to Manifest Disapproval of Prayer.

Little John, who, at the mature age of four, has learned the Lord's Prayer, is often criticised by his sister, two years older, for slight mistakes which he cannot always avoid in offering the petition. A few Sundays ago he was taken to church for the first time. When the moment for the prayer arrived and the congregation bowed their heads John's mother took the precaution to whisper to him that he must be very quiet. "Listen," she said, "and you will hear the minister pray." This interested John at once, and his little face took on a look of serious attention, but his mother, watching him covertly, saw his expression change presently to one of surprise and disapproval. A few minutes more, and he could stand it no longer. What could this man be saying? Not a word of the prayer did he recognize as the only formula he had ever heard called by that name.

"Why, mother," he exclaimed, in a tone audible over nearly half the church, "do you hear? He isn't saying it right at all!"

SORES AS BIG AS PENNIES.

Whole Head and Neck Covered—Hair All Came Out—Cured in Three Weeks by Cuticura.

"After having the measles my whole head and neck were covered with scaly sores about as large as a penny. They were just as thick as they could be. My hair all came out. I let the trouble run along, taking the doctor's blood remedies and rubbing on salve, but it did not seem to get any better. It stayed that way for about six months; then I got a set of the Cuticura Remedies, and in about a week I noticed a big difference, and in three weeks it was well entirely and I have not had the trouble any more, and as this was seven years ago, I consider myself cured. Mrs. Henry Porter, Albion, Neb., Aug. 25, 1906."

A Fascinating Game.

A precocious little girl living on one of the crowded business thoroughfares of the city was in the habit of gazing out of the window at the busy street below for hours at a time.

"What is it, Gladys, that you find so constantly interesting in the street?" asked her mother one day.

"Oh," came the wise rejoinder, "just watching the cars go pro and con."—Harper's Weekly.

Sheer white goods, in fact, any fine wash goods when new, owe much of their attractiveness to the way they are laundered, this being done in a manner to enhance their textile beauty. Home laundering would be equally satisfactory if proper attention was given to starching, the first essential being good Starch, which has sufficient strength to stiffen, without thickening the goods. Try Defiance Starch and you will be pleasantly surprised at the improved appearance of your work.

He hath a tear for pity and a hand as open as the day for melting charity.